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JUST STUFF

How we wrestled with the export suspension announcement...some yearend reports...and a few odds and ends make up most of this issue. You might find more though...read on...even though this is only a 2-page issue.

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NOW IT'S NUTS TO IVAN You've read about it...seen it on TV...heard it on radio. Yep, we're talking about the stuff that hit the fan as a result of the President's announcement that shipments of grain to the Soviets will be suspended. Press interest was naturally a bit overwhelming...we thought you might like to have some inside dope about it.

A Saturday press briefing, pulled everyone together at the Dept. in the midst of a serious snow storm...explained that the suspension of all grain shipments to the Soviet Union were for reasons of national security and foreign policy...got into details as to how the action would be handled, especially to assure that the burden of the suspension would not fall unfairly on farmers.

Then on Monday of this week, Vice President Mondale and the Secretary held another press briefing where it was announced that the Commodity Credit Corporation would assume the contractual obligations for wheat, corn and soybeans previously committed for shipment to the Soviets.

Continued interest necessitated two briefings on Tuesday and a daily morning briefing thereafter...heavy press attendance...and thousands of telephone calls from the press, farmers, grain dealers, elevator operators--you name it.

One way to handle the telephone calls was to set up a series of toll-free numbers, advertise them, and put a crew of about 16 people to work answering the calls, from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. daily. Inf folks and program people from four agencies have been taking the calls--the Agricultural Marketing Service; Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service; Economics, Statistics and Cooperatives Service; and Foreign Agricultural Service. Even that became an almost impossible task...some 15,000 calls backed up the first day.

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RADIO CALLS IN '79

Meanwhile, other things were happening.

For instance, Jim Johnson, GPA, reported that while total number of calls to the news lines his shop has available dropped slightly

last year, total number to the consumer news line rose. - The calls for farm news totaled 10,755; those for consumer news were 4216.

Number of farm stories increased by 12% whereas the consumer stories slipped by 17%.

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DOCUMENTING THE DOC. Remember that lengthy documentary we told you about on structures? GPA's radio operation sent 244 tapes to radio stations in and near the locations where the 10 public meetings were to be held...back in mid-November. Folks here then conducted a telephone survey to find out what happened.

They talked with 174 program directors...92 said they had received the tape; 62 said they didn't...20 weren't too sure if they had or not.

Of those who said they received the tape, 39 used it. Not surprisingly, 51% of those said they thought the program was too long. Nine stations gave us exact air times...most were around noon.

Five stations said they didn't use the program but did cover the structures meeting themselves. Five stations asked for the program, saying they didn't receive the first mailing. Three said they listened to the program and liked it...and five said they used the program but changed the form by excerpting portions.

A week before the structure meeting was to be held in a station's area, the radio folks here contacted each station (yep, all 244) telling them they had a 60-sec actuality on the subject. This time, 197 stations took the news feed and used the actuality in a newscast before the meeting. Each feed had a tailored closing to make it local to the meeting in the station's area. Stations who didn't take the feed said they were too far from the meeting location for the item to be useful...or that they weren't interested.

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PUBS YOU MAY WANT

Although we're having to make this letter short, there have been a few booklets issued recently that you may not have seen and will want to order.

Try Agricultural Marketing Service, Inf. Div., for "Federal-State Market News Reports, a directory of services available."

Write Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service's Inf Div. for "The Agricultural Conservation Program." It gives a rundown of 1978's program year work.

Then for "Program Results and Plans," ESCS-76, write the Inf. Div. of the Economics, Statistics and Cooperatives Service. It's another explanation of the economics et al work but for 1979.

And, of course, if you haven't yet received your copy of the "Fact Book of Agriculture," which we plugged some time ago as it went to press, write GPA for it. In fact, you can even write "Inside Information" for it if you wanta.

